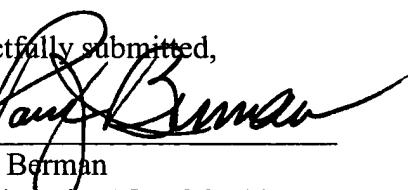


**REMARKS**

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Dated: December 24, 2003

Respectfully submitted,

By   
Paul J. Berman

Registration No.: 36,744  
COVINGTON & BURLING  
1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004-2401  
(202) 662-6000